

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

A Monograph of the British Hieracia.

By JAMES BACKHOUSE, Jun. 8vo, York, 1856.

WE have much pleasure in announcing the publication of this book, which cannot fail to attract considerable attention. The author has spent several years in obtaining the requisite information, in collecting multitudes of specimens, and in cultivating most of the supposed species. He has been in active correspondence with those botanists in this country and on the European continent who are known to have carefully studied this difficult genus.

It is with great satisfaction that we perceive the modest manner in which Mr. Backhouse introduces his book to its readers. He does not pretend to have produced a perfect monograph, but hopes that what he has done may "form a nucleus round which further knowledge may be collected." He thinks it not unlikely that some of his species may ultimately be proved to be only varieties, and that some of his varieties may be considered as species by future botanists, and very reasonably hopes to obtain that indulgence and excuse for errors of the kind which every real searcher after truth has a right to expect. Let his views be examined in the spirit in which they are published, and the author is manifestly ready to submit cheerfully to the result.

We have some slight personal knowledge of the care with which Mr. Backhouse has examined all the points treated upon in this book, and have considerable confidence in the soundness of the opinions formed by him. We know that he has not spared time nor labour in the acquisition and arrangement of his materials.

It will probably astonish some of our older readers to find that there seem to be 33 distinct species of *Hieracium* inhabiting the United Kingdom, and still more, that 11 of these are supposed to be new. The wonder will be lessened by remembering that the only really elaborate work upon the genus is the 'Symbolæ Hieraciarum' of Fries; also, that until after the publication of that work, very little addition had been made to the knowledge of our native species since the appearance of Smith's 'English Flora;' most collectors, and even some botanists, being satisfied if they could force any plant discovered, to conform itself to some one or other of Smith's species. This habit was not confined to such difficult genera as *Hieracium*, but applied to the whole native flora. It is probable that such a compliment has seldom or never been paid to any other book treating upon natural history. That it was well deserved originally we do not deny; but we do assert, that after a few years this habit became most detrimental to the advancement of science. Its bad effects have hardly disappeared, and even now the knowledge of the native botany of Britain can scarcely take a position of equality with that attained in several other European countries.

But we must return to the consideration of Mr. Backhouse's book.

Probably the most elaborate and novel part of it is that which

treats upon the species allied to *H. alpinum*, *H. nigrescens* and *H. pallidum*. He has shown, we think satisfactorily, that the *H. alpinum* of all our Floras includes several well-marked species. Similarly he states, that several new species occur in each of the other groups represented by the above-named plants; and also, that some of the names hitherto used in our books (and even in the above-mentioned great work of Fries) are erroneous.

From his position at York, and various engagements, the author has not been enabled to elucidate the synonymy as much as we could have desired; neither has he studied some of the Herbaria that we should have recommended to his notice. He has however been supplied with large accurately named collections by Professors Fries, Blytt and Grenier, and has thus had sufficient materials for the determination of the plants described in the 'Symbolæ' and the 'Flore de France,' where the French species are described with great skill. He also appears to have had the free use of the large collections of Professors Arnott and Balfour and that of our colleague Mr. Babington.

We think that he has made a good use of these opportunities and therefore cordially recommend his book to our readers.

A Rearrangement of the Nomenclature and Synonymy of those species of British Coleoptera which are comprised under the sections Geodephaga, Hydradephaga, and part of Philhydrida, being the first portion of a general British Catalogue. By J. F. DAWSON, LL.B., and HAMLET CLARK, M.A. London, 8vo. 1856. Post free for 12 stamps, on application to the Rev. H. Clark, All Saints, Northampton.

In the shape of a small pamphlet of ten printed pages, and under the above promising though somewhat indefinite title, we have received the first instalment of what will certainly be a welcome boon to the collector of British Coleoptera. For years the want of some list of these insects, which, with the Lepidoptera, engross nearly the whole attention of our native entomologists, has been severely felt; the imperfections of the 'Manual of British Beetles,' by the late James Francis Stephens, and of the lists of British insects published by that author and by Mr. Curtis, becoming every year more manifest. Under these circumstances the value of the present undertaking, by authors so well known as careful Coleopterists, must be evident to every entomologist, and we trust that the sale of the present part, of which more than half consists of the nomenclature of the *Geodephaga* so recently and admirably worked out by Mr. Dawson, may be such as to induce them to continue their enterprise. A certain number of these lists are printed on one side, so as to serve as labels for the cabinet, and the synonyms given appear to be confined to such names as have been quoted by British authors.